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SUBJECT: WOMEN'S ACTIVISTS ASK FOR JORDAN-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

¶1. (SBU) On January 10, the Embassy organized a dinner in honor of visiting Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) Michael Posner and Director of Policy Planning Anne-Marie Slaughter. Invitees included a number of Jordanian women's rights activists, who suggested key priority areas for future USG women's assistance programs: increased funding for educational and professional exchange programs, funding for research by Jordanian academics to better understand factors which hamper the advancement of women, and programs that reflect what Jordanian women consider to be key issues.

¶2. (SBU) In conversation with A/S Posner and Dr. Slaughter, guests responded to questions such as, "What would you like Secretary Clinton to know?":

-- The President of the General Federation of Jordanian Women and former Member of Parliament Nuha Maayta suggested that more exchange visit programs were needed, particularly among professional women. She believes that Jordanian women would be delighted to host American women/visitors and that this would facilitate understanding, tolerance, and knowledge-sharing. Maayta herself had been on an exchange visit to the U.S and found the program to be a rewarding and an invaluable learning experience.

-- Prominent women's rights activist Senator Leyla Sharaf urged the USG to fund independent academic research in Jordan carried out by Jordanian women's organizations that they, themselves, identify as priority areas.

-- American Literature professor at the University of Jordan Dr. Rula Qawwas, for example, echoed this request and pointed out that no research had ever been written on the feminist movement in Jordan. "It is important to know where we have come from in order to chart our future course."

-- Finally, Senator Nadia Bushnaq, director of a large community center in Zarqa, argued that funding should follow the model of the Global Women's Fund. She has worked with this group and appreciates the level of freedom allowed when funds are granted. This flexibility has enabled her to run her center without undue interference or excessive control thus freeing her to identify and address the most urgent needs of her clients. "Sometimes we need assistance to fight domestic violence, but the latest grants only ask for proposals on Trafficking in Persons or child labor, for example. Here on the ground, we know best what is needed." She said that the USG should adopt a funding mechanism similar to the Global Fund's to facilitate independent and effective implementation, thus strengthening the capacity of Jordanian women.

¶3. (SBU) This cable has been cleared by DRL and S/P staff.

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